



## Illinois Department of Commerce

& Economic Opportunity

### OFFICE OF URBAN ASSISTANCE

Bruce Rauner, Governor

December 31, 2015

Dear Governor and Members of the General Assembly:

The Employment Opportunities Grant Program (EOGP) (20 ILCS 605/605-812) requires the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (Department) to administer a grant program designed to expand employment opportunities for targeted populations in eligible grant areas in Illinois, and report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activities undertaken by awardees. For your review, below please find a program summary and a list of activities undertaken to optimize efficiency and execution of the EOGP for 2015.

#### **PROGRAM SUMMARY**

EOGP is administered by the Department's Office of Urban Assistance. The goal of EOGP is to prepare targeted populations – minorities, women, homeless, the long-term unemployed, veterans, youth aging out of foster care, and ex-offenders – to enter and complete building trades pre-apprenticeship programs, apprenticeship programs, and/or obtain employment in the building trades industry.

After addressing challenges from the last several fiscal years and with improved program standards, in fiscal year (FY) 2014 EOGP released a competitive Request for Application (RFA) with a \$1,250,000 appropriation, awarding 14 grants. Calendar year 2015 has been dedicated to review and increased monitoring of these grants to ensure adherence to fiscal and programmatic guidelines.

#### **PROGRAM MODEL**

The EOGP program model continues to focus on the core fundamentals of the building trades industry by providing program participants with exposure to the technical skills, basic soft skills and on-the-job training deemed necessary to be successful in the construction industry. This knowledge and understanding of the industry will enable many program participants to become self-employed entrepreneurs, continue their education and pursue careers in the building trades and/or construction industry.

#### **CHALLENGES / ACHIEVEMENTS**

##### **CHALLENGES**

- Limited funding for staff has prevented the Department from hiring a grant administrator to assist the EOGP program manager.

- The State budget impasse has created challenges in processing grant modifications for the current grantees.
- Without an appropriation in FY16, EOGP will not be able to issue grants for the current fiscal year.

#### **ACHEIVEMENTS**

- Increased oversight of quarterly reporting documentation to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance.
- Improved communication with grantees and monitoring of grant programs.

#### **PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

##### ***Year-to-Date\* Cumulative EOGP Performance Metrics***

# of individuals accepted into a program	670		
# of individuals who completed a program	430		
# of program completers accepted into apprenticeship program	93	22%	Percentage of program completers
# of program completers placed in building trades employment (union and/or non-union)	134	31%	
# of program completers entering non-union non-building trades employment**	70	16%	
# program completers becoming self-employed entrepreneurs	21	4%	
# of program completers continuing education	118	27%	

*\*Through September 30, 2015. All grants end December 31, 2015, and these metrics will be adjusted during the first quarter of calendar year 2016.*

*\*\*While the goal of EOGP is to provide building trades employment opportunities, construction jobs are still limited following the most recent recession. The Department now asks grantees to track non-building trades employment obtained by its participants, recognizing that EOGP participants gain job and life skills that are applicable in other fields of work.*

#### ***Qualitative Results***

Program participants who successfully complete their EOGP-funded training program are armed with the skills necessary to enter a building trades apprenticeship program or building trades employment, and ultimately have increased opportunities in jobs where they can earn a living wage. In turn, this impacts the Illinois economy by creating a stronger pipeline of trained workers who are able to obtain and keep jobs in the building trades industry. Opening these doors increases diversity within the industry and prepares more individuals for careers in a vital field, which will help keep the workforce strong and competitive and provide better opportunities for Illinois' working families.

**GRANTEE LIST**

Grant dates: 5/1/14 – 12/31/15

<b>FY14 Grantees</b>	<b>Type of Organization</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>
Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County (BCCLC)	Community-Based Organization	Lake	\$ 125,000
Black United Fund of Illinois, Inc.	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
Chicago Federation of Labor Workers Assistance Committee	Labor Union	Cook	\$ 125,000
Chicago Women in Trades	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
Chicagoland Prison Outreach	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
Coalition for United Community Action - O.R.T.C., Inc.	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
Community College District No. 508, County of Cook and State of IL	Educational Institution	Cook	\$ 125,000
Developing Communities Project	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
Emerson Park Developmental Corporation	Community-Based Organization	St. Clair	\$ 125,000
Homework Hangout Club, Inc.	Community-Based Organization	Macon	\$ 125,000
Illinois Central College	Educational Institution	Peoria	\$ 125,000
Prairie State College	Educational Institution	Cook	\$ 125,000
Saint Paul Church of God in Christ Community Development Ministries, Inc.	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000
SGA Youth and Family Services	Community-Based Organization	Cook	\$ 125,000

**GRANTEE KEY HIGHLIGHTS/SUCCESS STORIES/IMPACT:*****Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County***

The Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County (BCCLC) recruited over 100 participants for EOGP, with 43 entering and 36 completing the program. Given the challenges of the targeted population, BCCLC was pleased with this result, having exceeded its goal of successful program completers. 21 EOGP graduates have been placed in construction related and non-construction positions, 10 graduates have applied to union apprentice programs and 1 graduate is self-employed in heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) work.

The BCCLC conducted three six-week sessions that offered participants a range of topics including preparation for entrance-level exams for construction apprentice programs; training in blueprint reading, carpentry, electrical, HVAC, painting, plumbing and residential energy conservation; construction math (algebra, geometry and

trigonometry); career development/job readiness; workplace skills; and on-the-job training with contractors in trades.

The BCCLC conducts job placement assistance every week providing employment vacancies, union open enrollment announcements and employment leads. All EOGP graduates have access to the BCCLC computer lab for placement assistance.

Although some graduates are placed in non-construction related positions, those positions are intended to be transitional until graduates can receive placement in construction related positions or acceptance into union apprenticeship programs. The BCCLC continues to focus on placement for graduates.

### ***Black United Fund of Illinois***

The Black United Fund of Illinois' seven-week Community Trades Pre-Apprentice Project (CTAP) offered participants an opportunity to achieve proficiency in math, literacy and cognitive aptitude in preparation for the apprentice entrance exams for the building trades or careers in the construction industry.

CTAP students received training to earn certifications in three areas of concentration beneficial for construction careers, including hazard awareness and lead-safe renovation training. The CTAP students also visited Dawson Technical Institute for a tour of the facility. There they received information on furthering their education in the construction field.

Of the 19 participants who completed the course, 7 have found employment, 1 applied to take the exam for the electrical union and 1 applied to further his education by attending Dawson Technical Institute.

### ***Chicago Women in Trades***

EOGP funding allowed Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT) to connect women with career paths in the high-growth construction industry. 63 candidates enrolled in one of four sessions of the Technical Opportunities Program (TOP). This 12-week, 170-hour program provided participants with instruction in math and test preparation, basic construction skills and hands-on experience, workplace readiness, and physical conditioning. The goal of TOP is to prepare women to be competitive applicants and successful apprentices in the construction industry.

CWIT exceeded its training projections by a wide margin:

TOP enrollment goal: 50 / Actual: 63

TOP completion goal: 35 / Actual: 51

### ***Apprenticeship & placement***

During 2015, program graduates who participated in CWIT in prior years entered apprenticeships as carpenters, laborers, ironworkers, sheet metal workers, electricians, plumbers and bricklayers. In addition to placing women into apprenticeships, CWIT also facilitates placement into employment for unemployed apprentices, as well as tracks placement of new apprentices in employment:

Acceptance into apprenticeship goal: 27 / Actual: 55

Placement in building trades employment goal: 25 / Actual: 50

Placement into non-building trades employment goal: 3 / Actual: 3

### ***Long-term success***

Nearly 30 former EOGP participants are now journey-level carpenters, iron workers, electricians, laborers, bricklayers, plumbers, pipefitters and sheet metal workers.

With the construction industry at last recovering from the devastating recession and creating opportunities for new entrants, the EOGP investment had a strong impact on the lives low-income women as well as supporting diversity within construction apprenticeship programs. With earning potential exceeding \$45 per hour for in-demand skills, this opportunity has transformed the lives of our formerly unemployed or underemployed participants.

While all women who enter and succeed in the construction industry are success stories, CWIT highlighted Caress, who entered the program as an unemployed ex-offender facing homelessness. She was even briefly incarcerated while enrolled in the training program, but she fought for the right to continue training. She entered the welding program after training and was placed with a manufacturing company while awaiting the results of her ironworkers apprenticeship application. Lacking transportation, she was the recipient of a donated car through the Women With Drive organization, which she received one week before she was called to the ironworkers apprenticeship program. She now earns more than \$23 per hour.

### ***Chicagoland Prison Outreach***

In the summer of 2014 Chicagoland Prison Outreach (CPO) embarked on a journey with EOGP to serve men and women who were formerly incarcerated. 32 individuals were accepted into the CPO welding program; 16 successfully completed. Those 16 who finished overcome drug addictions and behavioral problems, all completing the program drug-free. CPO was also able to provide mentors to all participants who completed the program.

Below is information about a few of the program completers.

*Alexis* has been working with Freedman and Seating for close to one year as a welder. He is also pursuing entry into various unions, such as carpenters and ironworkers.

*Troy* successfully completed the program, but for him it wasn't just about finishing the program. Troy learned to stay drug-free and learned not to allow discouragement to overwhelm him. He learned how to create a resume and many other soft skills. Troy has held a non-union, non-building trades job at Ford Motor Company since October 2015.

*Julian* successfully completed the program and has gone on to work for Chicago Heights Steel. He is currently union laborer, a member of the United Steelworkers.

### ***Prairie State College***

The Prairie State College (PSC) Building Trades Program was designed to address barriers to employment by providing NCCER (National Center for Construction and Education Research) Certified training in the building trades industry, essential skills, on-the-job training opportunities, entrepreneur skills, and hand tools and uniforms needed to become a start-up business.

The training sessions lasted for nine weeks. During the last two weeks, participants spent 90 hours in the field performing on-the-job training at a local nonprofit organization or business. In the past, PSC participants have refurbished a community youth center, helped to restore and paint a private school and finished a retail space for a coffee shop/art gallery. During this time the students also learn teamwork and team leadership skills.

Throughout the program, if necessary, PSC addresses remedial education needs and other barriers to employment that may arise. PSC supplies supportive services to include provisions and services needed to succeed, including on-the-job training stipends, safety gear, transportation and child care.

The demographics of the 2014-15 program participants were 48 African Americans, 4 Hispanic, 5 women, 17 ex-offenders, 2 homeless, 2 recovering addicts and 13 long-term unemployed.

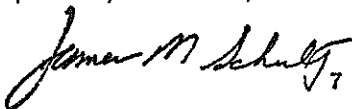
PSC met or exceeded its program goals. With 42 participants who completed the program, PSC exceeded the expected outcome of 35. Of those, 18 are working in the trades, 14 have other employment and 9 consider themselves self-employed. Nearly 50 percent said they have earned income as a result of the training. PSC continues to work diligently toward finding jobs for participants within the carpentry industry or another suitable industry.

#### **KEY ISSUES/NOTES:**

- In the future, the Department may pursue inter-agency networking to strengthen EOGP. Developing relationships with the Capital Development Board, Public Building Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program, Chicago and Cook County Building and Construction Trades Council, and large contractors would be a stepping stone to ensuring that program completers have a pipeline for entry into a building trades apprenticeship and/or building trades employment.
- The Department may also establish an EOGP consortium to maximize the partnership among grantees, construction contractors and organized labor to address historical underrepresentation. This collaboration would be vital to the development of a customized curriculum which would ensure program participants are armed with the skill sets to be successful in building trades apprenticeship or employment.
- Due to the time it takes to enter a building trades apprenticeship and attain journey-level status within a building trades union, it has been difficult to capture participant progression after the end of the grant term. As such, it is sometimes challenging to tie EOGP results with the overall goal of the program. The Department has drafted verbiage and will modify current grant agreements so that grantees are required to provide information on former participants' building trades progression on a semi-annual basis for four years following the end of the grant term.

The Department's Office of Urban Assistance has implemented a number of changes that have strengthened EOGP. These changes include implementation of fiscal and programmatic guidelines, revised reporting forms, introduction of a quarterly report review form, and increased monitoring and communication with grantees to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance. Our primary objective remains increasing building trades employment opportunities for targeted populations. We will continue working to improve outcomes for EOGP participants.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Schultz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Schultz  
Director